

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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FOR AGRICULTURE

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, PINT, UR
SUBJ: FOOD RATIONING IN USSR

REF: A. MOSCOW 2656 B. STATE 43786

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE NOT YET OBSERVED
RATIONING OF FOOD SHORTAGES DURING TRAVELS OUTSIDE MOSCOW
(LIMITED BY SOVIET TRAVEL CONTROLS), INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAIL-
ABLE INDICATES THAT THESE EXIST TO SOME EXTENT. AMONG AREAS
WHICH SEEM TO BE AFFECTED ARE VOLGA RIVER REGION FROM GORKIY
TO ASTRAKHAN AND SOME OUTLYING PARTS OF MOSCOW OBLAST. END
SUMMARY.

2. SEMI-OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION THAT RATIONING NOW IN EFFECT IN
VOLGA AREA WAS PROVIDED IN MOSCOW ZNANIY SOCIETY LECTURE MARCH 11
WHEN SPEAKER STATED, IN REPLY TO QUESTION, THAT "CARD SYSTEM"
NOW BEING USED THERE (REFTEL A). HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED
BEING IN GORKIY WHERE HE OBSERVED POTATOES AND BUTTER BEING
RATIONED. SYSTEM, HE SAID, WAS INSTITUTED TO CONTROL SUPPLY
SITUATION. OTHER REPORTS, SOME OF WHICH ATTRIBUTED TO MORE THAN
ONE SOURCE, INDICATE THAT POTATO RATIONING OCCURRED EARLIER
IN ASTRAKHAN (PRESENT SITUATION THERE NOT KNOWN) AND THAT
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BUTTER IS SHORT SUPPLY IN VOLGOGRAD REGION.

3. SOVIET SOURCES IN MOSCOW GENERALLY ACCEPT REPORTS OF RATIONING AS TRUE, SOME OF THEM CITING FRIENDS WHO HAVE TRAVELED AS PROVIDING CONFIRMATION. ONE SOURCE WHO COMMUTES TO MOSCOW FROM SOUTH OF PODOLSK ON REGULAR BASIS REPORTS TRAINS FROM SOUTHERN AREAS OF MOSCOW OBLAST FULL OF PEOPLE TRAVELING TO MOSCOW TO PURCHASE FOOD ITEMS WHICH ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY WHERE THEY LIVE. ON RETURN TRIP IN EVENING, TRAVELERS ARE REPORTEDLY LANDED DOWN WITH LARGE SUPPLIES OF STAPLES- POTATOES, CABBAGE, DAIRY PRODUCTS, ETC. ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, MOSCOW CITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS ISSUED UNPUBLISHED INSTRUCTION TO TRADING ORGANIZATIONS REQUESTING THAT SALES PERSONNEL NOT SELL LARGE QUANTITIES OF FOOD STAPLES TO ANY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL.

4. AS TO BE EXPECTED, FOOD SUPPLIED IN MOSCOW SEEM ADEQUATE. RECENT VISIT TO CENTRAL KOLKHOZ MARKET REVEALED SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF POTATOES (SMALL IN SIZE) BEING SOLD AT 40 KOPEKS PER KILO. DURING SAME VISIT, MEAT SUPPLY WAS BETTER THAN USUAL FOR WINTER PERIOD , PERHAPS INDICATING INCREASED SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS AS RESULT OF SHORTAGE OF FODDER. FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN MARKET WERE IN SHORTER SUPPLY THAN USUAL FOR THIS TIME OF YEAR, APPARENTLY AS RESULT OF CRACKDOWN IN GEORGIA ON PEASANTS WHO NORMALLY BRING THEIR PRODUCE TO MOSCOW FOR SALE IN MARKETS.

5. LENINGRAD ADVANCE PARTY ADMINOFF REPORTED ON VISIT TO MOSCOW LAST WEEK THAT THERE IS ALSO MORE MEAT THERE THAN USUAL BUT SHORTAGE OF MILK PRODUCTS BECAUSE COWS ARE BEING KILLED FOR LACK OF FODDER. REGULATION SIZE OF ROLLS HAS CLEARLY BEEN REDUCED. DACHA AREA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS COTTAGE CHEESE (TVOROG) BUT NOT WAS TO BE FOUND THERE ON RECENT TRIP. SIMILARLY, RECENT TRIP TO BYBORG FOUND ONLY ONE PIECE OF BONY PORK AND THREE RABBITS IN COLLECTIVE FARM MARKET.

6. EMBASSY ASSISTANT AGRICULTURE ATTACHE CHECKED SEVERAL STATE OUTLETS IN KHARKOV ON MARCH 5 AND IN KRASNODAR ON MARCH 7. CHEESE, WHITE BREAD, RICE AND MACARONI SUPPLIES WERE ADEQUATE. MEAT SUPPLIES WERE VERY POOR WITH ONLY SAUSAGE, SMOKED BACON, SALT PORK, PIG FAT, PIGS' FEET AND SIMILAR ITEMS AVAILABLE IN ADEQUATE QUANTITIES. DECENT BEEF AND PORK WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VIRTUALLY ABSENT. MILK AND PARTICULARLY EGGS SEEMED TO BE

AVAILABLE. MARGARINE ALSO ON SALE. VEGETABLES WERE ALSO

IN POOR SUPPLY WITH EVEN THE USUAL ONIONS, BEETS, AND CARROTS,
NOT READILY AVAILABLE AND THAT WHICH ON SALE WAS OF POOR
QUALITY. A VERY FEW POTATOES (FAIR QUALITY) WERE SEEN BUT NO
CABBAGE . APPLES (POOR QUALITY) ONLY FRUIT SEEN IN STORES.
NEVERTHELESS, NO SIGNS OF LONG LINES OR CONSUMER CONCERN WERE
OBSERVED IN OREL, KHARKOV, ROSTOV- ON- THE- DON, KRASNODAR,
PYATIGORSK
OR MINERALNYYE VODY VISITED DURING PERIOD MARCH 5 THROUGH 9.

9. COMMENT: WHILE INFORMATION REMAINS FRAGMENTARY, BASIS
EXISTS FOR ASSERTION THAT FOOD SHORTAGES IN SOME REGIIONS HAVE
LED TO RATIONING. HOWEVER, FULL EXTENT OF THESE SHORTAGES IS STILL
DIFFICULT TO ASSESS, AND AUTHORITIES, BY INSTITUTING RATIONING,
APPEAR DETERMINED TO ALLEVIATE SITUATION BY PREVENTING HOARDING.
SOVIET TRAVEL CONTROLS HAVE FRUSTRATED SEVERAL RECENT ATTEMPTS
BY EMBASSY OFFICERS TO TRAVEL TO REGIONS WHERE SHORTAGES
REPORTED.

EMBASSY HAS REQUESTED REGISTRATION OF TRAVEL TO VOLOGRAD AND
ASTRAKHAN FOR PERIOD MARCH 18-22. ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE TO VISIT
OTHER AREAS ALONG VOLGA FOLLOWING WEEK.

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